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Secretary of Defense William J. Perry
Remarks to Navy League Sea-Air-Space Exposition

Attached are remarks of Secretary of Defense William J. Perry as delivered to the Navy League Sea-Air-Space Exposition in Washington, D.C. on March 31, 1994.

Secretary of Defense William J. Perry
Navy League Sea-Air-Space Exposition
Thursday, March 31, 1994 - 12:15 p.m.

Secretary Perry: Thank you very much, Evan. That's just exactly the right length for an introduction. I love it.

As you wander through the exhibits here today, it makes you very glad that the Continental Congress did not listen to Samuel Chase, who was one of the delegates to that Congress from New Hampshire. He said, "Building an American navy is the maddest idea in the world."

That mad idea over the years has led to the most powerful navy in the world, and generated many of the great ideas at this exposition which will help the United States Navy maintain its world leadership position long into the future.

In this new world we're in, many demands are put on U.S. military forces, including the U.S. Navy. For example, just last week we completed the withdrawal of our troops in Somalia with a Marine Expeditionary Unit providing very effective cover during the withdrawal. Today Air Force and Navy fighters are monitoring the skies over northern and southern Iraq to enforce UN Security Council resolutions. And we're putting together, with the UN and NATO, a plan to end the violence and formulate a peace agreement for Bosnia. If that agreement is reached, we plan to supply a significant portion of the peacekeeping forces.

All of this use of military force, all this application of military force, is going on on a day-to-day basis. But, there are two concerns that are uppermost in my mind today, and I wanted to talk briefly about the first one, which is Korea; and at more length about the second one, which is Russia.

North Korea's development of nuclear weapons is a very serious security issue and it's especially dangerous when we see that North Korea, at the same time, is developing and testing ballistic missiles, which have the range to reach South Korea and Japan. If we do not come up with some solution to this problem, we could end up with a nuclear arms race in the Asia Pacific region as other nations move to counter the efforts of North Korea.

We're concerned about proliferation as well. North Korea's history of irresponsible arms sales adds to our concern over its potential possession of nuclear weapons.

But, while we are seriously concerned with the threat that could develop as North Korea develops significant nuclear capability, I want to emphasize that I do not believe that there is a danger of imminent military confrontation. Indeed, we are pursuing firm but patient diplomatic steps with North Korea on their nuclear program; but at the same time, we are prudently increasing the defensive capability of our forces there in the event our diplomacy is not successful.

The second issue, and the one I really want to talk about at more length today is the situation in Russia. This is particularly on my mind now because I've just returned from a trip to Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Kazakhstan, the four states of the former Soviet Union that still possess nuclear weapons.

Before I left on this trip I gave a speech at George Washington University outlining our policy towards Russia and the other states. I called it a pragmatic partnership. "Pragmatic partnership" is just a term, but what is behind it is that we have grounded in our vital national security interests in Russia, the first of which, the very obvious one, is guaranteeing nuclear safety of the enormous nuclear arsenal that is the lethal legacy of the Cold War. Notwithstanding, all the agreements that have been made, all the disarmament which has gone on for the last few years, the Russians still have about 25,000 nuclear weapons, and we need to take every step we can to get that vast arsenal reduced.

Secondly, we're very much concerned about preventing the proliferation of all weapons of mass destruction, but in particular the nuclear weapons we have there.

We are concerned with maintaining the regional stability in and among the nations that formerly made up the Warsaw Pact, and we want to avoid returning to that antagonistic global rivalry which previously characterized the Cold War and our relationship with the Soviet Union.

Our challenge, then, is to build this new pragmatic partnership with a nuclear super power that is undergoing revolutionary change even as its empire dissolves around it. This is truly a daunting challenge.

We believe we can succeed in this challenge if we stick to a policy based on realism and a policy based on pragmatism.

What do I mean by realism? I mean making a realistic assessment of Russia's future. Realistically looking at the different outcomes that occur from the revolutions that are underway there today, and how those different outcomes could affect our national security interests.

By pragmatism I mean basing our policy, by establishing a partnership with Russia which moves us forward on two parallel tracks. The first track of which emphasizes those programs which I think we could call win-win. That is, they are beneficial to Russia, while at the same time they advance the national security interests of the United States. But the other track, emphasizes programs which hedge against the impact of a truly negative outcome in Russia.

My trip to these four states showed the policy of our pragmatic partnership in action. The most important issue we addressed, was the disposal of the former Soviet nuclear arsenal located in those four states. I'm pleased to report that with our help, all four of those nations are making good progress towards reducing or dismantling their nuclear arsenals. We're helping these nations remove the ICBMs from the launchers, deactivate them, put their warheads on trains, and ship them to a dismantling site. Reducing the nuclear threat does not get any more immediate, or more direct than that.

This entire effort is funded by something that's called the Nunn/Lugar program. This program was named after two senators -- Senator Nunn and Senator Lugar, whose clear vision of this problem three years ago caused them to write into authorizing legislation with provisions which allow us to go ahead on this program. We are making real progress.

Last week when I was in Kiev, for example, we signed an agreement to provide an additional $50 million in Nunn/Lugar funds to assist in dismantling their nuclear arms, and while I was in Ukraine I asked the President and the Defense Minister to allow me to see this program in action. They agreed and flew me down to Pervomaysk is where the old Soviet Union operational ICBM site is located, which comprised SS-19 and SS-24 ICBMs, a total of 100 ICBMs are based there, including about 800 warheads -- all of which, at one time were targeted at the United States. In Pervomaysk allowed me to go down into the control center, which is about 12 stories underground, and took me into this little room where the two Russian soldiers were operating the control system, and they demonstrated a missile checkout for me. They checked out all of the missiles on that site, which is the last step they take preparatory to launching them. So, while I was standing there watching, I was seeing these two young men go through the semi-final stages of launching 800 warheads towards the United States -- a power that was capable of

destroying every major city in our country. It was truly a stunning experience to see that.

We left the control site then, and went out to the silos, and they opened up some of the silos for me to see. I walked over and looked down at this SS-24 silo, and the missile was still there, but the warheads were gone. The previous week they had been put on a train and shipped to the dismantling site. Indeed, to this date, more than 120 of those warheads have been removed and shipped to the dismantling site. By the end of next year they will all be gone and Ukraine will become a non-nuclear member of the nuclear proliferation treaty.

A second issue on my trip was the issue of defense conversion. We're helping Russia and some of the other newly independent states to convert some of their huge defense factories to commercial production. I'm not going to describe this to you in any detail, but let me just give you a vignette of a plant that I visited in Ukraine.

After we left Pervomaysk, which is the operational ICBM site, they flew me to Dnepropetrovsk, which is where they have one of the largest ICBM factories in the former Soviet Union. That's where they manufactured the SS-18 ICBM. Those of you with a reasonably good memory will remember that the SS-18 is specifically the missile which stimulated our MX program and it's specifically the missile which stimulated our SDI program.

We went into this factory where they formerly manufactured the SS-18, and there, along the lines where the SS-18s used to be made, they were building electric buses and tractors. That gave me a warm feeling altogether.

I might say, it did not give the people in the plant a warm feeling. They had 46,000 workers at that plant, only a fraction of which were engaged in this electric bus and tractor fabrication. The rest of them they were trying to convert over to building space vehicles, but as you well know, that's a very limited and highly competitive market. In short, they're having a very difficult time effecting the conversion to which they've already agreed, and which they're already committed from the plant's point of view because they're not getting orders for SS-18s any more, for which we are thankful.

Defense conversion is difficult enough in America, as all of you, who are in industry understand, but it is a staggering challenge in Russia today. Going through that Dnepopetrovsk plant and trying to put myself in the position of the plant manager, and imagining what I was going to do, not only converting, but converting in an economy which lacks the infrastructure which we have in the

United States. It is a daunting task. We are helping them in a small way in this, and we're helping them by providing funds to U.S. companies to go over and form partnerships...U.S. commercial companies to form partnerships with Russian defense enterprises, organized around building commercial products.

This program was started a few months ago, and in Belarus, for example, which is the last country we visited on our trip, we announced the first three contract awards -- three American companies that actually formed business partnership with Belarus defense companies for the production and marketing of defense products. These are small steps forward, but from the Russian and Ukrainian and Belarus point of view, while they don't solve their problems in the near future, they at least provide some light at the end of the tunnel, some indication that they're making progress in the right direction.

We also discussed with them, and launched really, a project for building prefabricated houses in Russia at a factory that formerly was making missile components. They have a desperate need for housing, in particular to house their retired military officers. They have factory space and workers that are not being fully used. What we did was provide the funds to an American prefabricated company who would transfer their technology for building prefabricated houses and help them build the first few thousand houses of that project.

So, these are some of the things we're doing to try to stimulate the Russians, the Ukrainians, the Kazakhstanis and the Belarusians to move forward and to finally get the last vestiges of the Cold War behind them.

Finally, we spent a fair amount of time in all four of those countries developing closer defense-to-defense, military-to-military relationships with these countries. The reason for that is two-fold. First of all, it is a natural thing for us to do to help influence the military in those four countries to move along in the direction of a military that works under a democratic civilian control. That's a very uncommon position in those countries. They see that being carried out successfully in Western countries, and they really are looking to us for tutoring as to how to do it in those countries.

But aside from that, we want to develop our contacts at all levels in the Russian military and the Ukrainian military because we can't forecast what's going to happen to the governments in those countries. But, we do know that whatever happens to those governments, the institution that's likely to be a surviving institution is the military there. So, whatever happens there, whatever new governments are formed, we want to continue to have ongoing communications and

understanding with that institution, and an ability to influence them in a direction of democratic reform.

The fourth issue we addressed on this trip was the issue of non-proliferation. We have made several hopeful steps in that direction. For example, we have agreed with Russia to participate in a newly formed successor institute to the COCOM. COCOM was the organization that formerly prohibited the flow of technology to communist bloc countries. Now that we're trying to restructure, we, the international community, are trying to restructure it to a different purpose, which is to prevent the flow of technology and subsystems that would be used in proliferation of weapons of mass destruction to those nations that are trying to violate the non-proliferation agreement. And we got some substantial support from Russia in that regard also.

While I was there I met with Minister Grachev who is the Defense Minister in Russia, and discussed with him the so-called Partnership for Peace which is an extension of NATO to undertake peacekeeping operations in conjunction with the nations of Eastern and Central Europe. After our meeting, Grachev at the press conference that followed, announced that Russia, indeed, would join the Partnership for Peace and they would submit their papers by the end of March which is, I believe, today. So, it should be about to happen.

So, we have been developing these close, collegial relations with the Defense Ministers of all four of these countries, including establishment of a hotline on my desk and connected with one on Grachev's desk which we have used to discuss a number of important issues, including soliciting and getting Russian support in our attempts to try to bring a peace solution in Bosnia.

I think, to sum it up, the Russian people are trying in a few, short years to change from an authoritarian government to a democratic government; from a state controlled economy to a market economy. They have succeeded in dismantling the controls of the previous system but have not yet established the new system.

In the words of the Italian philosopher Gramsky, "The old is dying, but the new cannot yet be born. And in the meantime, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."

Ironically, when Gramsky made that statement, he was speaking of the demise of capitalism. He said that in 1938 in Italy. Now, that same statement is highly applicable to the demise of communism. But we do see, anybody that visits Russia or Ukraine today will see this great variety of morbid symptoms

– a deeply divided political system with profoundly disaffected elites, economic uncertainty, social dislocation, and political instability.

Russia is struggling and will continue to struggle, but a historic change is underway. We, in the United States, cannot control that outcome. We can, however, influence it, and it is the policy of this Administration and it's the actions we're taking in our Defense Department, doing everything we know how to do to try to influence this in a positive outcome, while, at the same time, taking appropriate hedges against a negative outcome.

The most important part of our hedge strategy is to maintain fully capable and ready armed forces. Every time I go to one of our bases I'm struck by the dedication and the professionalism of our young men and women in uniform. Just two days ago, I attended a memorial service at Fort Bragg for the soldiers who were killed when the fire and debris from the crashing F-16 hit the staging area where they were preparing to load a C-141 for a jump. This horrible accident was a reminder of the danger of military service, even in peacetime. The soldiers who died there are in our thoughts and in our prayers, and our sympathy goes to their families and their injured.

After I left the memorial service, I went to the hospital to visit the injured who were there, and their spirit was truly amazing. The survivors' immediate response to the accident shows the quality of our service members. They didn't panic, they didn't run from the scene. They moved quickly to help their friends. Many were burned, and burned seriously, trying to help put out the flames in an attempt to save their fellow soldiers.

One of the soldiers I saw had second degree burns all over his hands and his arms. He was free of the crash when it happened, but he ran in and was beating out the flames on one of his buddies.

These soldiers and their counterparts in the other services show why we have the finest military in the world today. We intend to keep it that way.

A highly trained, ready military equipped with first rate weapons is an absolutely necessary hedge against this very uncertain future in the world ahead of us.

This strategy is controversial. When we put our budget together, we put things in this budget, we have requested items which are not needed for the current threat. They're put in there because we are anticipating, we're trying to prepare a hedge against problems which might occur a decade from now.

For example, we have proposed building another nuclear submarine. When we look at our requirements for nuclear submarines, given the downsizing of the submarine force, we would not need to build another nuclear submarine for another ten years. We've been building nuclear submarines at the rate of about three a year. That sustained our roughly 90 submarine force with a roughly 30 year life. Rather than shut that down as we go down to a 45 to 50 submarine force, we have decided to continue building them at the rate of one every three years. Not because we needed that submarine right now, but because we needed the capability to build the submarine. Once we shut that capability down, we were fearful we could never reassemble it again. It wasn't just the difficulty of recertifying a nuclear facility, which is difficult enough. The main problem is how do you reassemble the intellectual capital once you let it disburse?

These efforts that we're taking give us a major of protection against threats that may develop in the future, including the possibility of a hostile militaristic Russia. We want to ensure that we have the effective military we need and the industrial base to support it.

In sum, then, our policies are based on a pragmatic, realistic approach toward Russia. On the one hand, they work to assist Russia in areas basically beneficial to both of our countries. But on the other hand, they protect us against the possibility of negative outcomes.

Graham Green once wrote that, "There always comes a moment in time when a door opens and lets the future in." The ending of the Cold War has opened such a door. The future is out there waiting to come in.

Our country, our allies, and the states of the former Soviet Union should seize this moment and shape the future, instead of being shaped by it.

Thank you very much.

(END)